



*Printed for H. Bonwick at the Red Lion in S.^t. P. Church-yard.
I. Savage sculp.*

A
Practical DISCOURSE
OF THE
SIN against the
Holy Ghost:

Shewing Plainly,

- I. What it is.
- II. How any Person may certainly know, whether he has been Guilty of it.

DESIGNED

To bring Incouragement to the Faithful Penitent, Tranquility of Mind to the Obedient, Joys to them that Love; and the Returning Sinner from Desperation.

Nihil ardet in Inferno nisi propria Voluntas.
S. Bernard.

L O N D O N,
Printed by J. L. for Henry Bonwicke,
at the Red-Lyon in St. Paul's Church-
Yard, MDCXCV.

THE
Author's DEDICATION
AND
PRAYER.

Blessed TRINITY,

FROM an Affectionate and
willing Spirit, from a Heart
desiring to please Thee, and to be
in all things right toward Thee;
I humbly Dedicate this Discourse
to the Uses of thy *Glory, Love,*
and *Obedience*; begging this on-
ly for my self, That I may not
Preach to others, and be my self
a Cast-away: “For thy Faith-
“ful People, begging Pardon
“and Peace, That they may be
“cleansed from all their Sins,
“and serve Thee with a quiet
“Mind; through Jesus Christ
“our Lord. *Amen, Amen.* St.

St. MATTH. xij. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men.

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.

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A

Practical Discourse

OF THE

Sin against the Holy Ghost.

S E C T. I.

The Occasion of this Discourse.

BEfore I come to the more particular Enquiries, in shewing what the *Sin against the Holy Ghost* is, and the several Uses, which I would draw from the Consideration of the Nature, and the Meaning of this *Unpardonable Blasphemy*, and leave them upon the Affectionate Thoughts of those who have

B not

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not yet quitted all their future Hopes and Expectations ; nor desire to do so : I will stop a little to mention some of the *Reasons*, and charitable *Designations* and *Intentions* of my Publishing a Discourse on this Subject.

I am perswaded (and perhaps I have observ'd) That there are some devout Christians, who, for want of a Right and True Account, and a full Knowledge of what *this Sin* is, have been *discouraged* from a Christian Course ; or else have *gone on heavily* in their Devotions and Obedience ; and in accomplishing (with Sincerity) those few Duties to God and Man, which our Ascended Saviour was pleas'd to leave us in Charge, when he went away ; Fearing that They have been Guilty of *this Sin* : And therefore that all that they do, or suffer, is to no Purpose.

And, tho' they truly aim at Immortality ; at a Blest and Joyful Resurrection ; and at the Divine Glory, Love and Obedience ; and from an affectionate and a willing Spirit, and

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a Heart right towards God, Desire nothing so much as to please him; and to be train'd up, and fitted, and trimm'd and disciplin'd for an Admittance to a New World of Blessed Spirits; and to come away and spend a Rapturous Eternity at the Feet of Jesus; yet all this while are afraid, they may have committed *this Sin*.

And this *cools* their Love of God, Hinders the *Liveliness* and the *Chearfulness* of their Duties, and keeps them off from a Religious Peace; and from the Prosecution of some Christian Actions, which they would otherwise cheerfully Perform.

For their Sake therefore, in the first Place, and to invite them to persevere with a *Holy Constancy and Joy* in the Commands of their Ascended Saviour, I will shew plainly and truly what *this Sin* is.

A *Second* Sort of Men there are, That by the Prevalency and Power of a Strong Temptation, have made

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some dismal Recessions from their Baptismal Innocence ; and are Sensible that they have fallen into a Sin, and have displeas'd their God.

But they would quickly and humbly return to their offended Father, with the Penitent Prodigal, were they not *afraid* they had been guilty of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost : And for this Reason they are *discourag'd* in their *Repentances*, and their *Return* to the Ways of God ; or at least go on very heavily in them ; with no Joy or Chearfulness, or holy Purposes and Resolutions : Which they say, they would *Quickly*, and *Thankfully* and *Sincerely* do, were they sure they had not been Guilty of *this Sin*. For their sakes also, will I plainly shew what 'tis.

A *Third Sort* I find there are, that have been very great Sinners ; Have long liv'd in a State of great Inconsideration, and Carelessness ; Prophaneness and Neglect of the Soul and Immortality. And *they* conclude,
That

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That among so great a Heap and Conjugation of Sins, which they have committed, 'tis ten to one, but they have been guilty of *this* too: And therefore, That 'tis to no manner of Purpose to return and seek a Reconciliation with their God; For their *day* (they think) is *over*: And if they should return to the Ways of God, and choose better; and live the Holy Life, which is much the easier, and the sweeter Life of the two, yet they suppose all's in Vain; They have *committed this Sin*; and the *Door* of Mercy is *shut* against them: And that now they had e'en as good let all run against the Rocks, and let alone the Soul, and take no more Care about it; But take their fill of Sensuality and Wickedness, and lie down in a State of Inconsideration and Prophaneness.

And for the Sake of these also, will I plainly, truly, and clearly shew, what *this Sin* is.

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That so the *one Sort* may see infinite Cause to *return* to their offended Father quickly : And tho' it be with Fear and Trembling, yet may do it also, with a holy Hope, great Encouragements, and a Religious Chearfulness too ; provided, it be with a **P**resent, **U**niversal, and **P**ermanent Change.

And the *other Sort*, Namely, the Person of a sincere Probity and Sanctity of Life, may go on in a Course of Faith and Devotion, Piety and Charity, Divine Love and Obedience, with a *Holy Joy* and a *Religious Peace*.

S E C T. II.

What the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is.

THAT I may make the present Discourse as *Satisfactory* as I can, to every Reader; and as *Useful* as I can for the Designs and Purposes, and Needs and Desires, of every Christian; That the Sinner may be encouraged and invited to return to his God, and his own truest Interest, by a *Speedy*, a *Sincere*, and a *Persevering Repentance*; and all may be encouraged, and endeared to go on chearfully in a Religious Course, *in the Ways of Pleasantness, and the Paths of Peace*; (*Prov. 3. 17.*) I will plainly insist on these three Things:

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I.

First, Shew what *this Sin* is.

II.

Secondly, Give a Rule how any Person may assuredly know, whether he has been Guilty of it or not.

III.

Thirdly, Shew the very great Likelihood, that you (Christian Reader) have not yet been Guilty of *this Sin*.

From all which three Particulars, I shall draw three Practical Inferences, or Instances of Application.

I. *Shew, What this Sin is.*

The Sin, or *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, was (as appears in this Chapter, St. *Matth.* 12.) the Sin of the Pharisees ; and in short, 'twas this :

They

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They Blasphem'd the Holy Ghost, in affirming, That those Miracles which the Holy Jesus wrought by the Power of the Holy Ghost, were done by the Power of the Devil : And consequently deny'd him who did them, to be the Christ.

And the Heinousness of it consisted in This : By these Miracles which he wrought (by the Power of the Holy Ghost) he design'd to convince them that he was the **Messias** ; And would by this Light, manifest to them plainly, that he acted by the Power of the *Holy Spirit* of God : He charitably designed those very Miracles which they reproachfully imputed to the Devil, to be a convincing Testimony from God, that he must be the **Messias**, the **Christ**, the **Saviour** of the World.

No ; they would not be persuaded ; would not come in to his Faith, and his Love, and his Obedience ; but would wilfully resist and oppose the Power of his Doctrine, and his
Miracles ;

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Miracles ; The convincing *Light* of which, plainly and clearly manifested, that he acted by the Power of God.

And rather than they would acknowledge them to be done by the Power of the *Holy Ghost*, they affirm'd, That he did them, by the Power of the Devil, v. 24.

Upon this, Christ to convince them, is pleased to tell them, That the Miracle of Casting out Devils (which he had wrought just before) could not be done by the Power of the Devil ; *For a Kingdom divided against its self could not stand*, v. 25. And therefore 'twas not likely that Satan should cast out Satan : And if Satan could not, or would not cast out Satan, then surely it must be by the Power of the *Holy Spirit* of God, that he cast out Devils, and wrought Miracles.

And if so, how could they choose, when they saw the Miracles that he did, but be convinc'd that he acted by the Power of God ? And consequently,

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quently, how could they Resist and Oppose, Deny and Disown him to be the Christ, the Messias, the Saviour of the World.

'Twas all as one : They would not be convinced by the holy Doctrines which he Taught, by the Miracles that he wrought, and Wonders that he did : And rather than believe on him, and become Wise and Happy, they obstinately affirm'd, That what he did by the Finger of God, and the *Power of the Holy Ghost*, was done by the *Power of the accursed Spirits* of Darkness.

Now, this was not only a Great *Blasphemy* indeed against the *Holy Ghost* ; But, 'twas a wilfull shutting their Eyes against the Light : Against the *Light* (I say it again) of that Doctrine, and those Miracles, which were done on Purpose to *Convince* them that he was the Christ ; whom notwithstanding they Deny'd and Disown'd, Resisted and Oppos'd.

Upon

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Upon this, Christ tells them, That if they continued in this *Blasphemy*, and would obstinately go on, to impute those Miracles, to the Devil, which were done by the Power of the *Holy Ghost*, and would not be Convinced and come in, and Receive and Believe on the Lord of Glory, but deny and oppose him, and maliciously and with a wilful Blindness, hold out against the visible Work of God; That *this* must needs be to them that *continue* in it, *unpardonable*.

And well indeed might it be unpardonable, when the Apostle says, *Act. 4. 12. There is none other Name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.* That his Name and Person; His Revelation, and his Love; His Message, and his Designs; His Doctrine, and his Miracles, should be Denied and Disowned, Opposed and Rejected, and their Eyes obstinately shut against all the convincing Arguments of his Doctrine and his Miracles, that he was the Saviour of the World. But

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But here may be one Material, and Important Question ask'd.

How comes it to pass, that 'tis said, in the Text, *Whosoever speaketh against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven*: How comes it to pass that the Speaking against *Christ*, should be more *Pardonable*, than the Speaking against the *Holy Ghost*?

To this, I Answer.

To speak against the Son of Man, *i. e.* against *Christ*, only before he was manifested to be the *Messias*, by the *holy Spirit* of God, and the convincing Miracles which he did: This might be a *Sin of Ignorance*, and therefore *Pardonable* upon a general Repentance.

But to speak against the *Holy Ghost*, *i. e.* to resist the holy Spirit of God, which manifestly appear'd in the Miracles which *Christ* wrought on Purpose to convince them, this could be no *excusable Ignorance*; but must be a *willful Blindness*. Nay, to impute them

them to the *Devil*, on Purpose, because they would not be convinc'd by them, to come in to Christ, and receive and own him: Surely, such an Opposition and Resistance; such a contradicting and crossing his gracious Ends, and merciful Designations to them, could be no other than an obstinate, willful Blindness, and a shutting their Eyes against the Light: And therefore (if continu'd in) could not but be *Unpardonable*.

And that's the Difference between speaking barely against the Son of Man, *before he was manifested* to be so, by Miracles, and by the Power of the Holy Ghost; and the Speaking against him, *after he was manifested* to be so, by Miracles, and by the Power of the Holy Ghost.

The one (as I said) might be a pardonable Ignorance; But the other must be an inexcusable willful Blindness.

S E C T. III.

*The Blasphemy of the Pharisees,
Unpardonable no longer than
wilfully and Impenitently con-
tinued in.*

BUT now consider, Christian ;
neither was the Blasphemy of
the Pharisees an *unpardonable Sin*, any
longer than 'twas wilfully and impeni-
tently continued in.

This I prove from their very
Case here, who were guilty of this
Sin.

None could deny our Lord more,
or oppose him more than his very Cru-
cifiers : yet even of them his very
words are to God ; *Father, forgive
them* ; That is, Deny them not the
means of Forgiveness, which is Re-
pentance : and deny them not For-
giveness, if they shall Return and
Re-

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Repent. And no doubt Christ was heard, in all that he pray'd for.

So that even they that at first resisted and opposed Christ, if afterwards they receiv'd and acknowledg'd him, by the convincing Considerations of his Doctrine and his Miracles; and with a sincere and humble Conformity of Heart and Life, to his Faith and Doctrine, laid hold on God's Mercy in Christ; even to these, Pardon and Remission is not deny'd by the Gospel.

Something of an Example of this, we have in *St. Peter*, in that shameful, and wretched, and dismal fall of his, in *denying* our Saviour. Here was no Ignorance; for he knew him, and own'd him to be the Messias, or the Christ.

But yet being prevail'd upon by a sudden Fear; He deny'd him: and not only deny'd the Lord that bought him, three Times, but swore him away too. *St. Matt. 26. 74.*

Here was a disowning and denying of him indeed; and That too, after
he

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he had been convinced, that he was the Messias, by the Power and Influence of the Holy Ghost ; and had upon That, receiv'd him, and acknowledg'd him ; and own'd him : A Denial of them therefore, against his own *Light, Knowledge and Conviction.*

And what, (you'll say) was not this a Sin against the *Holy Ghost* ?

To this I Answer :

Had he obstinately persisted in it ; wilfully continued in it ; and liv'd and dy'd in it ; it had been the *Sin against the Holy Ghost.*

But in *St. Peter's Case*, there are always *three Things* very Considerable.

First, 'Twas by a sudden Fear, (a sudden Surprize of That Passion) that he fell.

Secondly, *The Quickness and Bitterness of his Repentance.* His Master look'd about upon him, and He considered what he had done ; and recall'd himself, and went out and wept Bitterly.

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Thirdly,

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Thirdly, *What was most considerable; The truth of his Repentance, appear'd by the Truth, and Perseverance of his Reformation*: For, no Fears could afterward any more prevail upon him; For he had the Courage to die for him, whom he had before deny'd.

These were three Things that were infinitely Considerable; And here (Dear Christian) give me leave to stop a little, to bring them home to your own Case, even yours in particular.

Perhaps, with *St. Peter*, thou hast faln; and faln too, *Knowingly* and *Wittingly*; against *Knowledge, Light* and *Conviction*: If so, Consider what he did, and go, do thou likewise; and, like him, do it *Quickly, Sincerely* and *Perseveringly*, and you shall not fail of Mercy.

Perhaps a sudden Fear, or a sudden Passion, or a sudden Surprise has betray'd thee to a Sin: Nay, perhaps 'thas not only been sudden, but *deliberate*; with open Eyes, and a full Consent of the Will: However, do
thou

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thou as he did : Return to thy offended Saviour with Penitential Sorrows ; By Faith lay hold on God's Mercies in him ; Shew him the *Truth of thy Repentance*, by the *Sincerity of thy Reformation* ; Crown and Perfect thy Repentance, by *labouring to obtain the Contrary Virtue*, and *Living in it* : But withall, do it *quickly* as he did, and *persevere sincerely* too ; and doubt not of the Mercies of Eternity.

He did it Quickly ; He did not stay till his Death-bed fill'd him with variety of Distractions, Pains and Agonies, and unfitted him for it : He did not stay till the worst of his days, those which lay upon his hands and were good for Nothing : He did not keep those for God, which he knew not what to do with himself ; but He did it Quickly.

He did it *Sincerely*, next : As appeared by the Shower of Penitential Tears ; which could not have dropt so soon, had he not been in good Earnest with his dearest Lord ; and had they not proceeded from a

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Sin against the Holy Ghost. 19

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heart

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heart swollen equally with Grief and Love. And,

Last of all he did it *Perseveringly* ; And in this Respect, go and do thou likewise : Shew him thy Love in the sincere *Permanency* of thy Reformation as he did : who having thrice following, deny'd him, did in a little time after say to him thrice following these Affectionate words (and made them good too) *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee, St. Joh. 21. 15, 16, 17.*

Hast thou faln? Why, oh why wilt thou for any *Hopes* or *Expectations* ; Any *Fears* or *Desires*, any *Delights* or *Advantages*, continue a day longer in thy Sin?

Do but look yonder in a holy Meditation, to that Lovely Futurity which so many wise Men have been content to live, and content to die for ; and then see if you can be the Person, that can think fit to venture so much for so little?

Look, in a quick and a piercing Thought, Look yonder, to *what eye*
has

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has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the Heart of man conceiv'd ; and think then whether a wise Man should be able to find it in his Heart, to venture all this for some unsatisfactory and dishonourable Iniquity.

Once more do but raise your Meditations (Dear Christian) to the lovely Regions of beatified Spirits ; Regions which cost thy Saviour an Agony and a Bloody Sweat, a Crucifixion and Death it's self, to purchase you the Hopeful Possibility of them ; and then see in That Thought if you can alway be content they should *cost you Nothing* ? Nothing of Penitential Sorrows ; Nothing of the Pains of Subduing a Temptation ; Nothing of the Self-denial of being without the Pleasures of a Sin ; Nothing of the Diligence, and Watchfulness, and Care, of a Reformed State ?

Come then, O come, my Soul, say, Seeing our Case is yet Hopeful, at least not Desperate, let us from this moment be content, that one short Life should cost us as much

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as this comes to, till all be over and ended, and we are consign'd to our New, and unknown, and eternal State, and Condition.

S E C T. IV.

How any Person may assuredly know, whether he has been Guilty of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

HAVING seen what the *Sin against the Holy Ghost* is ; That is, what it was in the Pharisees : I shall Presently shew what it is, in them who have been baptized, and have been Believers.

But before I come to *That*, I will stop a little ; to shew how any Person may assuredly Judge, whether he have committed this *Unpardonable Sin*, or not.

Now

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Now, That no Man may mistake, or, be at a loss in This, and dwell in the uncomfortable State of Irresolution and uncertainty, take This Rule :

'Tis certain, no Man commits a Sin against the Holy Ghost, if he be afraid he hath, and desires he had not.

And the Reason of it is this : Because such Penitential Passions, Desires and Affections are against the very Definition, or Nature of *this Sin.*

For, where-ever these are found ; These, Humble, Holy Fears to offend God, and Desires to Please him ; these Penitential Passions and Affections ; There has not yet and cannot have been, a *Witting*, a *Willing*, a *Malicious* and *total Apostasie*, or falling off from the Faith of Christ, and the Gospel.

And yet such an Apostacy, or Falling off 'tis ; such an Opposition and Denial of our Saviour 'tis, that

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makes it the *Unpardonable Sin* ; to one that is , or has been a Believer.

1. It must be *Knowingly*, and not of Ignorance.
2. It must be a *Willing* Apostacy, or Denial; and not of Force, or Compulsion.
3. It must be *Malicious*; and not of Infirmary.
4. It must be a *total* Falling of; and not some particular Sin :

It must be all These to make up the full Measure of the *Unpardonable Sin*.

So that as I before said, all Penitential Passions and Affections; All your Doubts and Fears lest you should have been guilty of it, and your Desires that you had not ; are against the very Nature of *this Sin*.

These Things (as I shall hereafter shew) are infinite Incouragements to the *Poor, Humble, Faithful* Penitent ; to go on, earnestly, and chearfully, and

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and with Great Resolutions in his Repentances; And in all his Faithful and Affectionate Desires to fit himself for the Merits and Satisfaction of his Saviour.

And with all, they are an infinite encouragement to the Devout, yet humble Christian, to go on with a *great joy*, even in the midst of his *Fears and Tremblings*; To persevere a little longer, (till his Day of Probation be once over) in all the Parts and Instances, and Duties of a holy Life; In the Conscientious Performance of These few Commands which our Ascended Saviour was pleased to leave us in Charge, when he went away.

Come then, (Dear Christian) Arise, and go on *Quickly* and *Perseveringly* in thy Penitential Resolutions; and in thy Faithful Desires and Purposes, to *cleanse* thy polluted Soul by the Waters of Repentance; and to fit it for the *Healing* Blood of thy Saviour.

Perhaps,

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Perhaps, Thou hast fallen from thy Baptismal Innocence, by some Known Sin ; and with *Grief* and *Love*, you do easily remember some dismal Instances of Ingratitude and Disobedience to your Master ; But yet whilst you own there is *Salvation in none other* ; and can *allow your self* in no one Instance of that Disobedience ; but desire nothing more than to reconcile him to you, by the Ways and Methods of his own Appointment : Why, Consider, though you have been a Sinner, you have been no Apostate ; you have neither fallen off from him, nor disowned, or oppos'd the Faith of your Saviour, and his holy Religion.

And till this be done ; Till thou *Knowingly, Willingly, Maliciously* and *Totally* fallest off from him, opposest and deniest him ; thou hast not filled up the Full Measure of This *Unpardonable Blasphemy*.

How true, and how great an Encouragement this should be to the *Quickness, the Sincerity, and the Per-*
manency

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manency of thy Repentance; and thy Return to him, and the Peace and Ease, and Serenity, and Delicacies of a Holy Life, you'll see presently.

S E C T. V.

3. *The great Likelihood that you (Christian Reader) have not yet been Guilty of this Sin.*

BY the Tryal of your Self (Dear Christian) by the foregoing Rule, you'll be able to make a Right Judgment of your State, in this Particular; and will find great Likes that you have not yet drawn upon your Self the Guilt of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy*.

And if not; what Infinite Encouragement have you, (even you in Particular, whatever others intend to do)

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do) to go on, in a Chearful Probity and Sanctity of Life ; a chearful Love and Obedience to your dearest Master.

And what infinite Encouragement has the Sinner to become a Penitent ? Provided he do it *Seasonably* and *Quickly* ; *Sincerely* and with *Perseverance*.

What infinite Encouragement has the *Poor, Humble, Trembling, Doubting* Christian, to take chearfully upon him henceforward the Easie Yoke, and Light Burden of his Saviour ; In the Faithful Discharge of these few Commands and Duties, to our *God*, our *Selves*, and *Neighbours*, which he was pleas'd to Leave with us.

And for him who has sincerely begun for Heaven and Immortality ; for a blessed and a joyful Resurrection : How great an Incouragement is it to continue to be all that's *Holy, Just, and Good* ; a little longer, till his day be over ; and he be called to lay aside
his

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his Business here, and come away to a New, and a Better World.

To think, and to be *assured* that you have not yet been guilty of the *Unpardonable Sin* : But may yet, if you persevere (through the Merits of your Saviour) fill one of the vacant Seats of the fallen Angels.

That you, even you too, may yet, (if you persevere) be one of those Beatified Spirits that shall pass away with him in a rapturous and a pleasurable Eternity.

That you, even you too, are not yet so far gone; but may, if you please, (through the Divine Grace; always ready for those that *beg*, and those that *use* it) be one of those Souls that may Cause *joy in Heaven*, by a quick and a persevering; and a sincere Return to the Commands and Laws, the Faith and Love of your Crucify'd Master.

For, do but give me Leave to *Examine your Case*, as to *this Sin*, a little further.

Perhaps

Perhaps you have been a Sinner, in some dismal Degrees and Instances.

And this, even This, has been infinitely unkind and ungrateful ; to have been so, towards a Tender Father, and a Compassionate Redeemer : This, even This has been dismal ; to Affront and Abuse so much Goodness ; and to hazard thy own Future Hopes and Expectations , by any known *Actual Sin* ; and much more by any *Habitual one*.

But come Christian, Though this be sad and dismal, can you have a better Encouragement quickly to Return , than This : That you have not been guilty of the *Unpardonable Sin*.

Oh come, let this melt Thee into *Love*, and endear Thee to *Obedience*. Let This melt Thee into Penitential Tears ; Tears of Grief, as well as Tears of Love ; Tears of Hope, and Tears of Joy too, as well as Tears of Repentance ; That this Sin and Blasphemy is not chargeable upon Thee.

For,

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 31

For, do but Examine,
Hast thou Blasphem'd the Holy Ghost
in Saying ever, That the Miracles
which thy Saviour did by the Power
of the Holy Ghost, were done by the
Devil? Didst thou ever make Use
of This as an Argument against the
Believing Jesus, and his Gospel?
Didst thou ever Resist and Deny him,
and his Holy Laws and Doctrines;
and make Use of This as an Argu-
ment to Resist and Deny him? No,
This you cannot charge upon your
Self.

And if so; Then, as I said, you
cannot chuse, but with Tears of
Hopes and Joys, and Grief and Love,
Return to him quickly by Repen-
tance; and Persevere and Hold on
in a New and a Better Obedi-
ence; Seeing there is, upon These
Terms, Hopes for Thee, even Thee
too.

To Examine a little further;
Hast thou been guilty of an *Utter*
Willful, and Spiteful rejecting of the
Gospel of Salvation, by the Holy Jesus?
Hast

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Hast thou been guilty of **This**, notwithstanding that in thy **Conscience** thou wert convinced, that **Jesus** is the **Christ**, and that **Faith** and **Holiness**, is the **Way** to be **Saved**?

Hast thou been guilty of an advised and absolute falling away from the Profession of the Faith of **Christ**, so far, that against former Knowledge and Conscience thou dost *maliciously* Oppose and Blaspheme the *Holy Spirit of God* in the Word, and in the Ordinances of the Gospel?

Hast thou so far *rejected, resisted, and utterly quenched* all the Perswasions and Motions of the Spirit of God, working formerly upon your Heart and Affections, as, out of hatred to **Christ**, to *Oppose* and *Deny* and *Disown* him and his Doctrines? Or so far, as thus to Crucifie to your self afresh the Son of God; and by disowning him, to *put him to open Shame*. (Heb. 6. 6.) *Treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the*

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 33

the Blood of the Covenant wherewith you were sanctified, an unholy Thing; or Thus done despite to the Spirit of Grace?

Then indeed (hadst thou also *totally* and *finally* continued in this State, and liv'd and dy'd in it) hadst thou been Guilty of this *Unpardonable Sin*.

Which Sin (by the way) is also called the Sin against the *Holy Ghost*, and becomes Unpardonable, because 'tis against the Office of the Holy Ghost; and against the Gracious Operations of the Holy Spirit; whose Business and Office 'tis to perswade us to receive Christ crucified, and the Faith and Doctrine of the Gospel.

Well; Though thou hast then been a Sinner, and unkindly Grieved the Holy Spirit of Love; yet thou hast been no Apostate: That is, Thou hast yet been Guilty of no *Willing, Malicious, Total* Falling off from Christ, and the Faith and Doctrine of the Gospel, tendred to
D thee

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thee by the Holy Ghost, and against the Light and Convictions of That Sacred Spirit; thou hast not yet *denied him*, and by a *willful Blindness* oppos'd him too.

If things are thus with Thee, (Sinner) as I verily believe they are; Come, be so far Comforted, as *cheerfully*, but yet *Quickly* and *Sincerely*, to return to thy offended God and Saviour; and do not stay in the Confines of Desperation any longer than you Dwell in your Sin.

Nay, for thy Consolation and Encouragement in thy Speedy Return to thy offended Father, in the Faith and Name of Jesus, I have This further to add concerning *the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*;

That the Sin it self is only upon this Account *Unpardonable*, because it hath a *finally* Impenitent Temper joyn'd with it: For otherwise were it possible that such a Sinner, should Repent (by a *Sincere* and
Perse-

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 35

Persevering Repentance) there would be no doubt of his Pardon.

Even the *Blasphemer of the Holy Spirit* himself, Repenting, Returning, Believing, Laying hold on the Mercies of God in the Lord Jesus, and Coming in to his Faith, and Love and Obedience, shall have Mercy.

Here stop a little (Dear Christian) and be perswaded to Consider the great Cause you have to Resolve presently, and intirely to cast off the Sin that does so easily beset you; and to choose Wiser and Better, and to Return to the Ways of your Master, with Speed, and Care, and Consolation too: Do it *Quickly*, and *Sincerely*, and I do assure you, your Case is not yet Desperate.

Oh that This Consideration might melt thee once more into Tears of Grief, and Love and Joy too; Tears of Hope and Penitential Tears. And how can it choose but do so; That there should be Balm in *Gilead* for thee, even Thee too: And that for

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thee by the Holy Ghost, and against the Light and Convictions of That Sacred Spirit; thou hast not yet *denied him*, and by a *willful Blindness oppos'd him* too.

If things are thus with Thee, (Sinner) as I verily believe they are; Come, be so far Comforted, as *cheerfully*, but yet *Quickly* and *Sincerely*, to return to thy offended God and Saviour; and do not stay in the Confines of Desperation any longer than you Dwell in your Sin.

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Sin against the Holy Ghost. 35

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Here stop a little (Dear Christian) and be perswaded to Consider the great Cause you have to Resolve presently, and intirely to cast off the Sin that does so easily beset you; and to choose Wiser and Better, and to Return to the Ways of your Master, with Speed, and Care, and Consolation too: Do it *Quickly*, and *Sincerely*, and I do assure you, your Case is not yet Desperate.

Oh that This Consideration might melt thee once more into Tears of Grief, and Love and Joy too; Tears of Hope and Penitential Tears. And how can it choose but do so; That there should be Balm in *Gilead* for thee, even Thee too: And that for
D 2 Thee,

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Thee, there should be a Physician there.

Let this make it an evil and a Bitter Thing to thee, as the Prophet speaks, *Jer. 2. 19. That thou hast forsaken the Lord.*

Evil and Bitter let it appear to thee, That thou hast held out in any Known Sin, against so much Tenderness and Compassion, Love and Pity, Long-suffering and Forbearance, which *St. Paul* says an Ingenuous Temper would have made another use of, *Rom. 2. 4.*

Evil and Bitter let it appear to thee, That thou hast held out in any Darling Vice, so long, against so many Gracious Calls, and Invitations, and Wooings of Thee to be Wise and Happy.

Evil and Bitter let it appear to thee, That thou hast held out so long, and taken little, or no Notice of the Dying Words of a crucified Master; but hast dis-regarded what he left thee in Charge when he went away.

Evil

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 37

Evil and Bitter, it must needs appear to thee, to have Held out so Long, against the Calls and Invitations of Agonizing Love, Speaking to thee meltingly, and Saying, *If ye Love me, keep my Commandments.*

Come (Dear Christian) after such a Thought as This, Try if thou can'st find it in thy Heart to Return to Affront him again, as bad as ever, by any Known Sin.

Try if in this Thought, you can go on, and still find it in your Heart, to Affront him as much as ever, by the voluntary Omission of any Known necessary Duty.

And then presently in a Holy Meditation look up to him, with Reverential Love, where he is now Preparing a Place for you, (if you will) and say to him, with an affectionate Humility,

Blessed Jesu ! Long hast thou staid for me, and not given me up to a Reprobate Spirit ; but thou shalt stay no longer : Thou hast long look'd for me, and not given me up to a Spirit

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of Desperation ; but thou shalt look
for me no longer.

I can hold out no longer, I will
hold out no longer, against so much
Love and Mercy ; So much Patience
and Forbearance ; So much Long-
suffering and Goodness.

I will, I can hold out no longer :
Let the Sin promise what it will,
I will Hold out no longer against
thee.

Let the Duty cost what it will, I
can hold out no longer against the
endearing Calls and Intreaties of
Bleeding, Groaning, Agonizing, Dying
Love. No, I cannot.

But seeing I have this Comfort,
that I have not *Blasphemed thy Spirit*,
or denied Thee ; and have so great
Cause to Hope, That I have not Com-
mitted the *Unpardonable Sin* ; I am
infinitely encouraged to come, and to
come joyfully to do Thy Will : And I
will come *Quickly*, for I know the
Night comes, when none can work.

S E C T.

S E C T. VI.

The first Practical Inference, or Instance of Application; from the Consideration of the Nature and Meaning of the Sin against the Holy Ghost: Viz. That 'tis Matter of great Encouragement for the Faithful Penitent to go on very Comfortably, but yet very Sincerely in his Repentances.

HAVING thus finish'd my *Three* first Heads of Discourse, and shewn plainly what *this Sin* is, and How we may assuredly know whether we have committed it or not; and shown withall the great Likelihood That no Christian Reader has: I now come to a few Inferences, or Uses.

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Inferences which I would leave not only upon the Understandings, but upon the Memory ; And not only upon the Memory, but upon the Heart and Affections, the Life and Actions of Every Reader.

That the Great Sinner may not Despair of the Divine Mercy.

That the faithful Penitent may be encouraged to go on, and with Comfort perfect his Repentances.

That no Man may *Presume to continue* in any Known Sin : And, That the Poor, Humble, Doubting, but Devout Christian, may be encouraged to go on, with a Holy Joy, in a Life of Faith and Devotion ; Piety and Charity ; Watchfulness and Care ; Probity and Sanctity ; Self-denial and Purity ; Love and Obedience ; a little longer, till his short Day be over, and all be well with him, and he finds himself admitted to the New Glories of a better World.

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 41

I. Practical Inference,

From the Consideration of what has been said of the Sin against the Holy Ghost ; Here first Results Matter of Encouragement for the Faithful Penitent to go on very Comfortably, but yet very Sincerely too in his Repentances.

Thou hast saln, perhaps, from thy Baptismal Innocence, and Affronted and Disobey'd a *Tender Father* ; ungratefully and unkindly abus'd all the Endearments of a *Compassionate Redeemer*, who was pleased to Die for you before you knew you needed him ; and have griev'd the *Holy Spirit* of God, by *whom* you were seal'd to the Day of Redemption, Eph. 4. 30.

That you have done *This*, may be a sad and a dismal Truth.

But perhaps too, you are extreamly Sensible that you have chosen amiss, and Resolve to return and to choose Better and Wiser ; and with
the

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the Prodigal, (St. Luke 13.) to arise and go to your Father, and say, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son, make me as one of thy Servants.

It may be, you find it to be a great Truth, what the Wise King tells you, (Prov. 3. 17.) *That the ways of Religious Wisdom, are ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace* : And it may be too, you have found what the Prophet says, to be as great a Truth.

A Truth ; *Isai. 57. last. There is no Peace to the Wicked.* And finding all this to be true, by your own Experience ; you have been often *thinking*, and are now *Resolv'd* to return to the Ways of God, and a vertuous Course ; and to be Wise and Happy.

Why, if this be so *Speedy* and *Sincere*, and *Persevering*, as that you find your Self to be in *Good earnest* with God and your Soul ; here is then Matter of infinite Incouragement,

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ment, for you to go on, with a holy Joy, and a very Great *Cheerfulness*, That your Labour is not like to be in vain, in as much as the *Unpardonable Sin* has yet been none of yours.

The Arms of your Saviour, that were once stretcht out upon the Cross, to the very Posture of Imbracing, are open to receive you too, even you : Only be sure of This, That your Return and your Change be *Present, Permanent* and *Universal*. And then the very Blaphemer himself is not excepted : He also, if he thus go, may cause Joy in Heaven among the Beatified Spirits of the Upper World.

You, even you in particular, (Dear Christian) that but lately were afraid you had committed the *Unpardonable Sin*, may *Cause Joy* too among the Blessed Inhabitants of these Lovely Regions.

And if you *may*, oh how should This Thought encourage, melt, and endear, your panting, sighing, languishing

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guishing Heart, into intire Resolu-
tions of Doing so!

And indeed tell me truly, Chri-
stian; Is it not infinitely better to
Cause Joy in Heaven, among the
Beatified Spirits of the upper Lovely
Regions, than *Joy* only to the Ac-
curSED Spirits of Darkneſs?

Methinks, to a Wiſe Man, it ſhould
be infinitely more deſirable and chu-
ſable to have a good Report of him
among the Beautiful Inhabitants of
the Upper World, than only among
a few wicked, and miſtaken Peo-
ple Here.

Methinks, it ſhould be much more
chuſable to *Cause Joy* to him you
have *Griev'd*; (even the Holy Spirit
of God,) than to *Cause Joy* to him,
who only *Rejoices*, in Hopes of your
being made a Partner with him, in
the Sorrows of Eternity.

And if you will preſently reſolve
to be ſo Wiſe and Happy, (for if
you will, you may; and theſe Bleſſed
Spirits deſire it, and look for it) as
to *Cause Joy* among theſe Bleſſed
and

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and sweet, and lovely, and glorious Inhabitants, the *Joy will* be your own: The Peace and *Joy* will be your own, *first* and *last* too: Yours *here*, and yours *Hereafter*.

You'll find a present *Joy and Peace* in the Change, far beyond whatever you found in the Ways of Wickedness, and in the Paths of Unrighteousness.

You'll find, upon the Change, a far Greater Pleasantness, and Ease and Satisfaction in a Religious Course, than ever you could find in a Debauch'd, an Irregular and a Prophan Life: Infinitely more Substantial, and lasting Tranquility and Sedateness, and Serenity of Mind, more light-somness and chearfulness of Heart in the one, than ever you did in the other: And besides your own *Joys* and Peace on Earth, you'll *cause Joy* among those Kind and Good and Blessed Spirits, to whom you Hope to be admitted; and with whom you Hope to pass away a Rapturous, and a pleasurable Eternity.

And

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And if you may cause these Joys to your *self* and *them*, tell me (Dear Christian) why will you not? why should not you, be earnest to do so; Considering the very Comfortable Hopes you have, that the *Blasphemy* against the *Holy Ghost*, has been none of your Sin?

And methinks, Christian, if you would but rationally compare and weigh things, and *see them as they truly are*; all the little uneasie Joys, and vain Delights of a Sinful Course of any sort, should appear very inconsiderable, compar'd with the Joys, Present and Future, which you would bring to your self, (as well as to the upper Lovely Spirits) by your Reformation.

For, if there be no Peace to the wicked, no true Joy; and if there be Joy in Heaven at the Conversion of a Sinner, and Joy to himself too, on Earth; Joys above, and Joys below; some Joys in Hand, and some in Reversion; some Present, and some Future; can there be a greater

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ter Madnes, than to deny your Self these True Joys, for any Iniquity whatever; in which there can be neither Peace, nor Joy; no long Peace, or lasting Joy?

Why will you any longer permit your Self to be thus cheated and abused by the World, or the Devil, or your own corrupt Affections, that would lead you to a Sin, and then fain perswade you there is more Peace and Joy in it, than in a Life of Purity and Vertue, Probity and Sanctity, when all this is False?

And we are assured 'tis False, both from the Voice of Scripture, and the Information of Experience. *There is no Peace to the Wicked; but the Ways of Vertue are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace:* So says the Language of the Scripture.

And the Voice of Experience, that says the same. No Peace; Nothing but Stings and Gnawings; Shame and Dishonour; Lashings and Rendings; Inward Frettings and Un-

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Uneasiness ; Discomposures and Disorders ; Heart-akings and Heaviness of Soul ; Fearfulness and Dissatisfactions of Mind ; Unquiet Days, and Restless Nights, attend a Sinful Course.

And, for the Truth of all This, I dare venture to appeal to the Sinner's own Experience.

And is This That which you like better than your own Inward Peace ? Is This That which you like better, than you do to Cause Joy in Heaven (by your Conversion from Sin to God) and to Recover your own Peace and Joy again here ; and to make way for the extatick Joys of Futurity ?

Come now (Christian) upon a View of *both*, take which of *the two* you please. Either the *Stings* and *Gnawings* ; The *Shame* and the *Disbonour* ; The *Lashings* and the *Rendings* ; The *Inward Frettings* and *Uneasiness* ; The *Discomposures* and *Disorders* ; The *Heart-Akings*, and *Heaviness of Soul* ; The *Fearfulness* and *Dissatisfactions* of

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of *Mind*; The *Unquiet Days*, and *Restless Nights*, of an Irreligious, a Careless and a Prophan Course: Or, do This: Cause Joy in Heaven, as well as Joy and Peace to your Self, by a Speedy Conversion from such an Uneasie Course, to the Love and Obedience of your Saviour, and the Ways of Holiness.

And blessed be God, That the Choice is yet put to you; and That you have not yet drawn upon your self the Guilt of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy*.

'Tis true, indeed, you may if you please (Christian) Call the Stings and Gnawings; the Shame and the Dishonours; The Fearfulness and Dissatisfactions of Mind; The Fretting and Uneasiness of a Sinful Course; you may Call them Joys: But yet, oh that the Inconsiderate Sinner would but try the Difference.

The Difference (I mean) between the No-Peace of a Wicked and a Prophan Course; and the unknown
E Peace

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Peace and Delicacies of a Vertuous
one.

All the Wisest, and all the Best, and
all the Discreetest Men of the World,
that could see furthest into These
Things, have done so: and they have
quickly been convinced of the Truth
of them.

And why will not you be That
Happy Person (Christian)? What
should hinder you from being Wise
for your Self, and Wise for your Eter-
nity? Wise for your Truest, and your
Best Interest?

Or, If you will not have me ask
you the Question, yet do This:
Ask your self the Question, in your
next Retirements, when you are
alone, and with-drawn from the
World.

Why, my Soul, (say) Why shall
not I be That Happy Person, That
shall Cause Joy in Heaven, and Joy
to my Self; Joy Above, and Joy Be-
low; Joys Present, and Future Joys,
by my speedy Conversion from Sin
to God, from my bosom, darling
Sin?

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Sin? (My Sin-----) Especially considering the Hopes we have, of being yet Successful, if we are *Speedy, Sincere, and Persevering.*

The *Unpardonable Blasphemy* has been none of our Sin; Oh come, then let us presently Arise and go to our Father; and return *Quickly* with the Prodigal.

And then for the little Time that we have yet left for Eternity, we'll Labour Chearfully to continue in our Father's House, and Favour, by the few Rules of Probity and Sanctity, which our Ascended Saviour was pleased to leave with us, when he went away.

Till our short Day be ended, and the Curtain be drawn, and we give way to the next Age, and we be securely put away to Rest; and then our Work is over.

S E C T. VII.

The Second Practical Inference, or Instance of Application, from the Consideration of the Nature and the Meaning of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, is This: It brings Matter of Reproof and Terrour to the Careless and the Prophane Person that goes on in any known Sin; and takes no Care to Come in, and Return to God By Repentance; and to Labour for the Contrary Vertue, and Live in it.

FROM what has been said of the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*; it appears very likely (Christian) that thou hast not been Guilty of that *Unpardonable Blasphemy*. Thou

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Thou hast not with the Pharisees *Blasphem'd him*, in affirming, That the Miracles which thy Saviour wrought by the Power of the *Holy Ghost*, were done by the Devil; Nor hast thou made use of this as an Argument to deny him to be the Christ.

Thou hast not yet been Guilty of a *Known, Malicious, and Total* Falling off from, and Denying the Faith of Christ, and the Doctrine of the Gospel.

Thou hast not yet been Guilty of an *Utter, Willful, Spiteful* rejecting of the Faith and Doctrine of Christianity; notwithstanding that thou wert convinc'd, that Jesus is the Christ.

Thou can't not Charge these Things upon thy Self; and therefore there is Reason to believe thou hast not committed *the Unpardonable Sin*.

So far, indeed, thy Case is Hopefull.

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But alas ! Perhaps all this while, thou livest in some known, willful Sin : Thou continuest impenitently in some one such Guilt ; takest no Care to get out of it, to Return to thy God by Repentance, and Reformation, and to *obtain the Contrary Virtue, and Live in it.*

If this be thy Case, last mention'd, what does it signifie, That thou hast not been Guilty of the *Sin against the Holy Ghost* ? For our Saviour tells us, *Except ye Repent, ye shall all likewise Perish.*

Thou hast not been Guilty, (very probably) of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy* : But alas ! that other known, willful Sin continu'd in, is (so long as 'tis continu'd in) *the Unpardonable Sin.*

And let This be Matter of Terror and Reproof, and just Cause of Trembling to the *Careless*, and the *Impenitent*, and the *Habitual Sinner.*

Suppose thou hast not been Guilty of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy* : Ay, but

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but what if thy Lord come and find any other Known Iniquity; (thy darling Bosom Vice especially) *unreform'd, unrepented of, unmortify'd, continu'd* in, by Thee?

Can'st thou expect then to be found in his Favour?

If thou art found out of the *Covenant of Grace*, that is, continuing in some Known Disobedience to him impenitently; thou hast then Reason, (so long as you so continue) to expect as little Mercy as if thou hadst committed the *Unpardonable Sin*. And how should this Consideration, drive thee to a *Quick* and a *Persevering Repentance* of that Known Sin, be it what it will.

And it, as *St. Paul* says, the Forbearance and Goodness of God should lead thee to Repentance; How should these *Terrours of the Lord*, as the same Apostle calls them, perswade Thee and prevail upon Thee to *run* to it; and to choose wiser and better; and to do it *quickly*; Lest thy Lord

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come, and find thee, (though not a Blasphemer of the Holy Ghost, yet) out of his Way, and his Obedience; *Going on* in some deliberate, habitual Sin.

Should he Thus come and find Thee; come either by Death or Judgment, and find thee out of his Covenant of Grace, and Consign thee to the Sorrows of Eternity; what shall it avail thee to say, thou hast not been Guilty of the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*?

For, could *That* have done any *More*, or done any *worse* than This? Than to exclude thee from the Favour of thy God; the Lovely Mansions of the Upper World; and Bind thee over to eternal Infelicities?

Let this therefore be a just Reproof and Terrour to all that continue in any *one Known willful* Sin: Though they have not been Guilty of the *Unpardonable Blasphemy*.

For if they will make any other Falls, any other Sins, *Unpardonable* to themselves by Impenitently continuing

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 57

tinuing in them, and going on in them, with open Eyes, and a full Consent of the Will, it can avail them but little, to say, they have not committed the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*.

And let it prevail with you, (Christian) even you in particular, to Turn from Sin to God; to cast off your former Evils, and instead thereof, constantly to set about all those Christian Duties, which our Lord was pleased to leave you in Charge when he went away. *And more particularly, to Throw off that Iniquity of yours to which you have most indulg'd, and by which you have most frequently faln; And to labour to obtain the Contrary Virtue, and Live in it.*

For let me most seriously and affectionately ask you, as I would a rational Expecter of a Bless'd Resurrection; You say, you have not been Guilty of the Sin and *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*; and 'tis like you have not: Well; and will you
(Chri-

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(Christian) make any other Known Sin or Fall *Unpardonable* to you, by your impenitently going on and continuing in it? Is it not infinite Imprudence, and infinite Pity you should delay your Return to God, one Day, when your Condition might be so Hopefull? Or, that you should make your Sin, become the *Unpardoned Sitt*; by your Impenitent Living and Dying in it; By your being found in it, at the Hour of Death, and the Resurrection?

For, do but Consider again: The *Covenant of Grace* is not only a *Covenant of Faith*, but of *Repentance* and *Obedience* too. And that 'tis so, is not only the plain Language of the Scripture; but even of Common Reason, that it should be so.

For, what think you, (Christian) Can the Murtherers of Fathers, and the Murtherers of Mothers, as the Apostle speaks; Can the Prophane, and the Impenitent, the Atheistical, and Debauch'd Person, expect to be
put

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put away to the Society of the Humble, Holy, Mortify'd and Devout Souls of all Ages?

Can the *Unjust* Person (impenitently so continuing,) expect to be put away to Just *Zachews*, and to the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect? Is it likely he should be qualified to pass away with them a pleasurable Eternity?

Can the *Prophane Swearer*, so Living and Dying, expect to have his Tongue tun'd in an Instant, to the different Notes of Hymns, and Hallelujahs, and Hosanna's, to him that sits on the Throne, and the Lamb for ever and ever?

Can the *Impure Adulterer* (till the polluted Temple of the Holy Ghost be cleansed by the bitter Waters of Repentance) expect to be put away to the *Chast* and Holy *Virgin-Mother*, and to the *Chast* Souls of all Ages? Or is it likely he should otherwise be qualify'd, to pass away with them, a Lovely Immortality?

Can

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Can the *Uncharitable*, the Bitter, and the Implacable Person, so continuing, expect to be put away to, and be qualified to spend a Rapturous Eternity, with *Charitable St. Stephen*?

Can the *Intemperate Person*, The Drunkard and the Glutton, expect to be lodg'd for ever with the *Abstemious* and the *Temperate*? and be like to be fitted, to pass away an Immortality with them?

Can the *Unmortified*, the Contentious and the Unpeaceful, expect to be put away to the Prince of Peace; to the *Meek Moses* and the *Meeker Jesus*?

Can the Wretched *Non-Communicant* expect the same Lot and Portion, with the Frequent and the *Devout Communicant*; and be like to be qualified to pass away a Rapturous Eternity with them?

Can they who will have such an *easy Religion* as shall *Cost them Nothing*, expect to be put away to those Devout Worthies, who for the
Divine

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 61

Divine Obedience and Love, were content to be *Destitute*, *Afflicted*, *Tormented*; not accepting a Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection?

Can the *Impenitent* Person, that takes No Care to shew the Truth of his Repentance, by his Reformation, expect to be admitted to *Penitent St. Peter*; and with him, to pass away a pleasurable Eternity?

Say, Christian, are these Things probable, or likely, even to Common Reason; Though there were no such Thing, as Scripture, and Divine Revelation?

No, surely.

Come then, take this *Second Inference* home to thy Self; Enter into a close and strict Meditation; Shew it to thy *Peculiar Sin*, any Iniquity continued in; and then See *how it Appears* to Thee.

I'll mention a Few: And among them, do you bring in your own; and see How that appears to You.

You,

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You, my Horrid Oaths and Imprecations, Why shall I venture the Wrath of my God, and the Loss of an Immortality for you? Why, the *Sin against the Holy Ghost* could have done but *This*: Why then shall I continue in you; which if I Impenitently do, you will do as much as *That*?

You, my Injustices; by which I make no Scruple to defraud my Brother; and when I know that I have done so, Refuse to make Restitution: You my Lusts and Impurities, by which I have defiled the Temple of the Holy Ghost: You, my Uncharitablenesses, my Bitterness and Implacableness of Spirit: You, my any other known Sin, whether of Omission or Commission; *Why shall I venture the Wrath of my God, and the loss of an Immortality for you? Why, the Sin against the Holy Ghost could have done but This: Why then shall I continue in you; which if I Impenitently do, you will do as much as That.*

See

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 63

See now in this Meditation how thy Peculiar, thy darling Sin and Vice, appears to thee. If it appear Amiable, and Lovely, and Safe, and Desirable, you may then e'en return to it again, upon the next Temptation.

But if it appear *evil and bitter*, Infinitely *Unsafe* and *Dangerous*, get Instantly out of it; and That whatever *Self-denial*, or *Mortification*, or *Loss*, or *Disadvantage*, or *Shame*, or *Reproach*, or *Care*, or *Diligence*, or *Watchfulness* it cost thee.

For what Good can it do Thee, if thou shouldest be consign'd to the Sorrows of Eternity, to remember that thou didst not Perish by the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, but by some other Sin, from which Thou wouldest not be perswaded to be divorc'd.

Come then (Christian) Cast off the darling Sin as thou wouldest a Coal of Fire out of thy Bosom: Let not a Sting so Evil and Bitter, so Unsafe and Dangerous; so Treacherous
and

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and Betraying, be imprudently entertain'd and cherish'd a Day longer. And seeing the Night comes in which none can work, and comes apace, comes quickly; Remember This: There can be *no such Wisdom* as to make a few Minutes or Days more, minister to the Safeties of a Blest Eternity; And there can be *no such Folly* in the World as the venturing so much as Eternity, for so little as the small Pleasures or Advantages of Sin for a Season.

SECT.

S E C T. VIII.

The third Practical Inference from the Consideration of the Nature and Meaning of the Sin against the Holy Ghost. It Brings Matter of Comfort to all Sincerely Humble, Holy, Devout and Obedient Persons; to Encourage them to Persevere and go on, a Little longer, with a holy Joy, and with a Religious Peace.

DEAR Christian, The Blasphemy *against the Holy Ghost*, was a Sin which you have sometime been afraid you had committed: You knew not what it was; and therefore could not tell, but that you might sometime or other have been guilty of it.

And This (perhaps) has fill'd you full of Doubts, and Fears, and Trem-
F blings;

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blings ; and has check'd and hindred you from going on chearfully in your Christian Course : or at least has made you go on heavily in it, without *Comfort*, and *Holy and Vigorous Resolutions*.

But now let the Sincerely Obedient Person, and the devout Lover of Jesus, be Comforted : For seeing there is so very great Likes, nay, so great a Certainty that he has not been Guilty of this Sin ; what infinite Encouragement has he to go on *Chearfully* in the *Faith*, and *Love*, and *Obedience* of his Master ? And in the sincere Performance of all Known Duties to God and Man : To be *stedfast and unmoveable*, always *abounding in the Work of the Lord*, for as much as he knows, that his Labour is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. 13.

Had your labour been like to have been in vain ; (by your having committed *This Sin*) you would have had but little encouragement, to have endeavoured to lay up any Treasure in Heaven.

Had

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 67

Had it been like to have been in vain, you could have had no Encouragement to take any Care of your Soul for the short Remaining part of your Life. With how little Comfort could you have gone on, in any of your Holy Purposes of an *Early, Chearful, Sincere, Universal* and *Constant* Obedience to your Saviour; in bearing his Easie Yoke and Light Burden, till your Day were ended, and your Race over?

Had it been like to have been in vain; with how little Consolation and Encouragement could you have been Content to bear any Thing, Do any Thing, Suffer any Thing, Lay up any Thing, for a joyful Resurrection; for your safe Landing to a Lovely Eternity, and for the Divine Favour; which had been unattainable?

For, who would take any Pains or Cares; Use any Diligence, or Watchfulness; Deny himself any Thing; Bear any part of the Cross; Resist any Temptations; Bear any

F 2

Re-

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Reproaches; Lose any Advantages; where all were like to be unsuccessful, and to no Purpose?

Perhaps Christian, as I said, This has been your Case: You have had these *Doubts* and *Fears*, because you were not sure but you might have committed *this Blasphemy*: And tho' you have always Feared to offend your great Master; Desired to please him; Kept close to him in the Faith and Love and Obedience of the Gospel; (and where you have failed of Perfection, and have fallen a Little, have quickly return'd to him by Repentance and Reformation, and a new and better Obedience;) yet all this while, perhaps, you have been afraid that all this *has been in vain*; Fearing lest you might have been Guilty of the *Unpardonable Sin*.

But now consider (dear Christian) once more; can you choose but go on with Comfort and Encouragement, in all that's *Holy, Just* and *Good*? Seeing your Labour is so far
from

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from being like to be in vain ; and this has been none of your Sin. Can you now find it in your Heart to lay down any part of the easie Yoke and Light Burden of your Dearest Lord ; who said, *If ye Love me, Bear it ?*

Is it not an infinite Encouragement, to your Alms and Devotions ; your Self-denial and Mortification ; your frequent Communicatings, and Penitential Offices ; All that you *can* do, and all that you *can* suffer for the Faith and Love and Obedience of the Holy Jesus ; that you are satisfied, that if you go on, and hold out but a Little longer, none of them will be in vain ?

Oh ! who would give out, and Fall back from any known Duty, or Shrink from the Yoke of Jesus, whatever it cost him to bear it a Little longer, when he has such an Assurance of his Freedom from the Guilt of this *Unpardonable Sin* ; and that if he do but persevere a little, all will be well with him to Eternity ?

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And, Say Christian; (whatever others intend to do) are not you he, that are Infinite willing all Things should be well with you to Eternity?

Are not you he, (let others do what they please) that are infinitely willing to fill one of the vacant Seats of the fallen Angels; And, when the Crowns and Palms of Eternity come to be disposed of, to have one of them bestowed upon *you*, even *you in Particular*, for all Futurity.

Are not you he, That are infinitely Willing to be in a Little Time plac'd above the Reach of Hopes and Fears; Sin and Misery; Enemies and Temptations; Doubts and Scruples; Poverty and Want; Sickness and Death; and every Thing that we call uneasie here? And in that State to pass away a Pleasurable Eternity, a Rapturous Eternity, with the Beatify'd Spirits of an Upper, New, a Better, and a Lovely World? Yes, you are; I Know you are.

Well

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Well then, Seeing 'tis so likely that your Short Labour will not be unsuccessful and in vain; and that you have not derived upon your self the *Unpardonable Blasphemy*; what should now hinder you from Persevering chearfully, and resolvedly a Little longer, till all be finish'd, and over, and ended, in a Holy Life, and a Happy Death?

The *Just Man* will not find it to have been in vain, that he has been so, when he finds himself admitted to Just *Zachæus*, and to the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect; and shall be consign'd to pass away with them, a Lovely Immortality.

The *Charitable* and the Forgiving Person will not find it to have been in vain, that he has been so, for one short Life, when he finds himself admitted to *charitable St. Stephen*, and shall be sentenced to pass away with him a joyous Perpetuity.

The *Meek and Peaceful* Person will not find it to have been in vain, that he has been so, for one short Life,

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when he finds himself admitted to the Meek *Moses*, and the Meeker Jesus, the *Prince of Peace* ; and shall be secur'd to pass away with them, a Pleasurable Eternity.

The Pure and the *Chast* Soul, will not find it to have been in vain, that he has been so, for the short Hour of this Life, when he finds himself admitted to *Chast* Joseph, to the *Chast and Holy Virgin Mother*, and the Prince of all chast Souls, the holy Jesus ; and shall be consign'd to pass away with them, a rapturous Immortality.

The Devout and Faithful *Penitent* will not find it to have been in vain that he has been such, for one short Life here, when he finds himself Admitted to *Penitent St. Peter*, and shall be Sentenc'd to be with him, for ever ; And with him to Sing Hallelujahs to him that Sits on the Throne, and the Lamb, for ever and ever.

S E C T. IX.

The CLOSE.

Two Things necessary to the Holding out in a Christian Course; which you (Christian Reader) that are now assured you have not committed the Unpardonable Sin, should by all Means Presently resolve upon: which if you did, you would be very Safe and Happy.

AN D now, why will not you, Christian, above all Things, labour to be one of these Happy Persons? Especially seeing there is so great a Probability, that your Labour will not be in vain.

Come

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Come then (Dear Christian) whenever a Sin, or a Strong Temptation shall present it self to you, for the Future, (seeing you have not yet been guilty of the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost* :) Or whenever you shall find your self tempted, and willing to omit a necessary Duty ; Do these two Things.

1. *Whenever a Sin shall present it self ; Resolve never to venture so much for so Little : Seeing your Condition is yet so Hopeful.*
2. *Whenever you are tempted to omit a Duty , because 'twill cost you something ; Resolve to venture something here , that you may win something in the other World.*

Blessed Jesu ! Fix these two Things upon the Hearts, the Affections, and the Resolutions, of every one that says he Loves Thee.

First,

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First, Whenever a Sin shall present it self, *Resolve never to venture so much for so Little.*

Never to venture the Loss of the Favour of God ; The sweet Illapses of his Love ; The Religious Joys, and the Unknown Peace of a Good Conscience ; The Sweets and Delicacies of a Devout Life ; All your Future Hopes and Expectations beyond the Grave ; All these Things which so many Wise Men have liv'd and dy'd for ; never to venture all This for the vain Delights, or the vain Advantages of Sin, for a Season.

But beat off the Temptation by Considering that you venture *all This, and more* than This, by a Compliance. And if you would be but content to hold out against it, a little ; 'tis not long till your Day would be over ; and your Combat would be ended, and you would be put away to the Joys of Peace and Victory.

That's the First of the two Things, which I would leave upon the Affections of him that says he Loves ;
till

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till he expires into the Element of Love; and be ordered there to Live and Love and Reign for ever.

Secondly, The other Thing, that would now incline and help you to hold out a Little longer, in a Life of Faith, and Love, and Sanctity, is This: Whenever you are Tempted to Omit a Duty, because 'twill cost you something; Then resolve to venture something here, that you may win something in the other World.

Come (my Soul) say with a generous and a Christian Resolution, and with an Heroick Bravery of Mind, Let others do what they Please, I am resolv'd to venture some *Pains*, and *Cares*, and *Difficulties* and *Self-denials*; And some *Watchfulness* and *Diligence*, some *Labours* and *Mortifications*, some *Scorns* and *Reproaches*, some *Losses* and *Disadvantages*, (now, seeing my Condition is so Hopeful) for these Hopes and Expectations of Futurity, which so many Wise, and Good Men have liv'd, and dy'd for. Tell

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Tell him whom thy Soul Loves,
That you think it all Reason in the
World, That That which cost him an
Agony, and a Bloody Sweat, Wounds
and Stripes, and a Crucifixion and
Death it self ; should cost you one
short Life of Probity and Sanctity ;
Purity and Devotion ; Faith and Re-
pentance ; Zeal and Love ; and a great
Obedience.

Look up to him, in a Holy Medi-
tation, and tell him with a Humble
Love, That you think, the Rewards
of Heaven are so Great and Glorious ;
and his Yoke so Easie, His Burden so
Light, and withall, will be so short
too, that you think it a great Shame,
to expect so great Glories, at a lower
and a cheaper Rate than a holy Life.

Tell him Affectionately and Hum-
bly too, That if a Life Eternal be not
worth this, 'tis worth Nothing.

SECT.

S E C T. X.

Three Aspirations ; Or Emotions of the Soul, that being joyfully Apprehensive it has not committed this Sin, is desirous henceforward to Please God in a Life of Faithful Obedience and Penitential Love.

A S P I R A T I O N I.

O Thou, whom my Soul Loves !

WHat should I have done, if thy Mercies had not been Infinite? And what should I do, if my Saviour's Merits were not Infinite? What should I do, if thou didst not pity and Love poor Penitents ; And if you were not Gracious and Merciful, slow to Anger, and of Great Kindness.

O

Sin against the Holy Ghost. 79

O my Love, What should I do, if my Mediator, my Advocate, my Intercessor, were not, (in a merciful Sense) thy *Self* and *Me* ? Partaker, I mean, both of Thy Nature, and my Nature ; *God and Man* ? What should I have done, had He not been Low as I ; Poor as I ; Weak as I in all Things, (Sin excepted) and tempted as I ; and yet equal all this while to thee, in his Divinity and Majesty, and Power, and Glory, and Holiness.

Dread (yet Dear) Father : Thou art *God*, and I am *Man* : For his sake who is *God and Man* united in one Person, Let not me, a *Man*, be separated from Thee, my God, by any Thing I have *Thought*, or *Spoken*, or *Done* ; or by any Thing which I shall ever *Speak*, or *Think*, or *Do*, in my whole Passage through the World.

I am griev'd that I have ever done any Thing to unfit me for thy Love : I am Griev'd that I have ever done any Thing, to displease a
Tender

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Tender Father : Griev'd I am, that I have done any one Thing contrary to his Commands, who said, *If ye Love me Keep them* : And I am grieved that I have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, by whom I was sealed to the Day of Redemption : And as I am griev'd that I have ever Unkindly and Ungratefully affronted him whom my Soul Loves : So, I grieve, because I Love.

I could Wish to Die before I ever Knowingly, and Willingly, and Deliberately, with open Eyes and a full Consent of my Will, do so any More, till I come up to thee. Particularly,

Here you may mention any Sin to which you are Tempted.

as to what I am most afraid of [*The Sin of -----*] Let Nothing, (O my Love) Let Nothing that is *Past* ; Let Nothing that *shall ever* befall me in it, Divorce and Separate me from his Favour, and his Love, whom my Soul *Loves* : and to whom, I yet Hope to Sing Hymns and Hallelujahs, among them that Love, in the Regions of *Holiness*

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*ness, and Peace, and Love for all Ages.
Dread Majesty and Dearest Lord ; I
bow the Head , and beg I may be
fitted to be called by thee,*

*Thy Affectionate Glorifier,
Lover and Obeyer.*

ASPIRATION II.

O Thou whom my Soul Loves !

I Desire Nothing in this World,
with any great Passion, but to
be Loved by him whom my Soul
Loves : But if my Sins and Disobe-
diences have lessened, or abated thy
Love to me ; O Give me above all
Things, a Repentance, True enough,
and Acceptable enough to restore me
intirely to thy Love ; and a Refor-
mation great enough, sincere enough,
and acceptable enough to keep me
in that Love, till I change Worlds.

G

O

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O my Love, make me Holy enough,
Just enough, Chast enough, Tem-
perate enough, Charitable enough,
Devout enough, Penitent enough,
Universally Obedient enough, to fit
me to be Lov'd by thee.

Make me but to *Love Thee* enough,
to fit me to be *Lov'd by thee*, and I ask
no more.

Should'st thou tender me an earthly
Crown, most willingly would I refuse
it, in exchange for This favour, *viz.*
That thou wouldest but make me to
Love Thee enough to be fit to be
Lov'd by Thee.

O Thou whom my Soul Loves; I
would refuse Ten thousand Kingdoms
and Ten thousand Worlds, were they
tendered to me, to take my Choice;
whether to have these, or to have the
Favour to be made fit to be lov'd by
Thee; To Love Thee enough to be
fitted to be Loved by Thee, eternally.

Lord, I Fear, and Tremble, and
Sorrow; My Heart is broken enough
even to wish my Self intirely annihila-
ted, when I think that some sad
Recessions

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Recessions from my Love and my Obedience, may have caused Great Diminutions of thy Love to me.

But because a Restitution to thy Favour is not Impossible; and I find some Instances of the Continuance of thy Love, in great Measures, to me; O be pleased to fit me to be restored to it, as intirely as ever: And not only so, but (O my Love) fit me by Repentance, Love and Obedience, or by something or other of *doing* or *suffering* for thee, to be lov'd by Thee, beyond what I have ever yet been; And keep me, O Keep me in it, till I come up to thy Seraphick Lovers.

O my Lord, some of them sinn'd against Thee, and fell sadly too; but they Lov'd much, and they had much forgiven: And I also would Love much, because I have much to be forgiven.

O my Love, thou knowest how much I Love, and how much I Grieve, because I Love no more.

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Oh ! let me but *Grieve enough*, or *Love enough* to be forgiven, and to be placed intirely in thy Love, and I would part with as many Kingdoms, Lives, and Worlds, as Arithmetick could Number.

Oh Grant me to be call'd in Heaven (Pardon this Ambition, dearest Lord) and to be made by Thee fit to be call'd There,

*Dread Majesty,
Thy Faithful Lover,
Glorifier and Obeyer.*

ASPIRATION III.

O Thou whom my Soul Loves !

HOW easie is it for Thee, to Pity where the Temptation is very Violent and Surprizing, thy Servant weak, and yet sorrowful and grieved for having faln. And then, Lord, how easie is it for Thee to Love where thou Pardonest ; and how easie

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easie is it for Thee to give the full Measure of Grace where thou Lovest; and How easie is it for Thee to Glorifie, where thou givest Grace.

Lord, I have faln by a Violent Temptation, and am infinitely griev'd for having faln : O pity, I beseech Thee, and Pardon ; and give More Grace to thy griev'd Lover, *N. N.* Pity me, that am troubled, that I have done, or spoken, or Thought any Thing Contrary to thy Love, and thy Obedience. If Omnipotence can pity *Loving Dust* ; If the God of Love can pity a Worm that Loves, and that Grieves for not Loving more ; Grieves for not having Obey'd more, and Grieves for not Grieving more ; then I am sure *my Love* can pity me.

O my Love, let the same Love pardon me, that pities me ; And when I am Pardon'd, Oh ! Let me have Grace and Strength to stand, most Acceptably : When I have Grace to stand, I shall be Loved ; and when I am Loved, I am sure I shall be Glorified.

But

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But, O Pardon every one of my Unfitnesses for thy Pity and thy Pardon; Every one of my Unfitnesses for thy Grace, thy Love, thy Glory; [*Especially, * that of-----*] and then for Love's-Sake, let me be call'd in Heaven.

* Here you may mention any Particular.

*Dread Majesty of Heaven and Earth,
Thy faithful, affectionate, devout,
Glorifier, Lover and Obeyer.*

—
"Αἰὼς ὁ Θεός, ἀγῶς ἰσχυρὸς, ἀγῶς ἀδάνατος.

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